

February 26, 2006
Transfiguration Sunday

"Reflecting the Glory of the Gospel"

2 CORINTHIANS 3:12-4:2

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. ¹⁴ But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. ^{4:1} Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. ² Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

You can often tell how people are feeling by looking at their faces. If their face looks like this (smiling face) you assume they are happy. If their face looks this (sad) you assume they are sad. If their face looks like this (angry) you assume they are angry and in a bad mood.

If you were there when Peter, James, and John came down from the mountain after seeing Jesus shining in glory, I believe you would have seen faces with smiles from ear to ear. They had seen Jesus in his glory. Peter even wanted to put up some temporary shelters so they could enjoy the moment a little longer. What would be on our faces if suddenly the heavens opened up at this moment and Jesus returned in glory? We would be smiling from ear to ear. We would be shouting shouts of joy. We would be giving each other high fives.

This past week there was an amazing high school basketball game in Athena, New York. The coach put in the team manager, an autistic student at the end of the last game of the season. He proceeded to pump in 6 three point shots in four minutes. The crowd went wild. Everyone had big smiles on their faces because of what this young man had accomplished.

When we gather here every Sunday morning, we are all smiles, because of Jesus has accomplished for us on the cross. He never missed a shot. He lived the perfect life we could never live. He took on all of our sins and failings and missed shots that condemn us to hell. We live each week in that glory. We want that glory to reflect itself on our faces, in our lives, in our homes, at school and where ever the Lord allows us to be this week. This morning we want to speak to you about your high calling and mission and purpose in life of **"Reflecting the Glory of the Gospel."**

1) Salvation from the law must fade

What you don't want to reflect on your face and in your life is the false hope that people can save themselves by following the 10 commandments. Paul tells us "We are not like Moses who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while radiance was fading away." When Moses came down from receiving the law from Mount Sinai his face glowed with God's glory. I am holding in my hand a cross that we made for Bible Camp. It has glow-in-the-dark paint on it. This absorbs the light and then glows, but gradually dims until the light shines on it again. That is what happened to Moses. When he came down from the mountain and gave the law his face glowed but then began to fade. This happened each time he brought another part of God's law to the people. He put a veil over his face so the people would not get the impression God's law is something that fades or can be changed as people change.

I don't want my face and my life to reflect a belief that God's laws can be changed or twisted or adapted to whatever people want for their lives. That leads people to believe they can keep the laws on their terms. Remember the song that made Frank Sinatra famous, "I'll do it my way." Ingrained in every human being who ever is born on this earth is the concept we can take what God requires and tweak it and twist it and mold it and shape it to fit our needs. That enables us to believe that we can live up to standards we make for ourselves and thus make ourselves acceptable to God.

An expert in the law once came to Jesus and asked him the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus asked him if he knew what the law required. The man replied, "Love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength and with all your mind," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said, "Do this and you will live." If he kept the law perfectly as it required, he could have eternal life. Then the man wanted to justify himself so he asked the question, "And who is my neighbor?" He wanted to be able to lower the requirements of the law so that he would not have to love certain people whom he did not like. Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan to illustrate how none of us ever measures up to what the law asks us to do. "There is none who does good. No not one."

With the live I live in the community, I do not want to give people the impression the laws of God are fading or unimportant. By cursing and swearing, committing adultery, not loving people, not being honest, or even not loving people as I should, I may give the impression this is OK with God. I will lower the standards and give the impression everything will be OK in the end, even if it does not measure up to God's standards.

That is exactly what happened to people at the time of Jesus and at the time of Paul. They reflected God's law to each other as something that was attainable for eternal life. Paul uses the example of Moses putting a veil over his face to show how these people had put a veil over their hearts. "But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts." When the Jewish people heard the law read in the synagogue they looked at each with faces that said, "We can do that! We can do that! We can do that to make ourselves acceptable to God." In Romans 10 Paul wrote, "They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." The veil over the heart is only removed when people come to see Jesus as

the only perfect source of their salvation.

Maybe an illustration will help. Last summer when we were in Canada, we were amazed initially at how cheap the gasoline was. The sign said \$1.35. As we drew closer to the station, the veil was lifted from our eyes. The actual price was \$1.35 per liter. Our job here on this earth is to help people measure God's law correctly and see how costly and impossible it is to earn eternal life on our own. Jesus said, "You must be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." We want people to see the law fade away completely as their hope of being accepted. We want the gospel shine brightly in its place

2) Salvation in the gospel must shine

The last thing you ever want to hide in your life is the joy on your face as stand in awe of God's glory that found a way to rescue you when you were lost. Listen to what Paul wrote, "But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." It is the Holy Spirit who removes the veil from your life and opens your heart to see the glory and the freedom you have in Christ. In Acts 16 it says of Lydia, "The Lord opened her heart to believe." By myself, I can never see God's plan to rescue me. I will always remain clueless. 1 Corinthians 2 says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

The box I am holding has a veil or cover over it. As long as this cover is over the box, I cannot see what is inside. If the cover is removed (remove cover and show cross) then I can see what the Lord has planned for me. How true are the words of John 1:14 "We have seen his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth." The veil is taken away from your heart and mine.

With the veil removed, the glory of God's plan begins to shine more brightly in your life with each passing day. This glory is reflected on your face and in your life to everyone around you. "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with every increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." The more you see of God's glorious plan to rescue you, the more this plan will be reflected in your life. Later in this letter to the Corinthians Paul writes, "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." By faith you absorb the blessings you have in Christ. They begin to fill your life, and you begin to shine forth with these blessings. Our faces are unveiled. We don't put a mask over them or a veil to hide our feelings and emotions. We want the world to see the reason why we are the way we are, and what we believe. In Psalm 51 David says, "Restore unto me the joy of my salvation." Then he goes on to say, "Then will I teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn to you."

Let me give you an illustration of what happens on our faces when the good news of being rescued by Christ fills our lives. I have notice when I visit people in the hospital, the people I meet after the visit seem to be more friendly to me than before the visit. Then one day it dawned on me that it may be that my face looks more intense as I go to the visit because I am thinking of what I am going to say and what Scripture to read. After sharing the comfort of the gospel, my life was also uplifted and it shows on my face.

What if we could have that kind of face all the time, the kind of face that is uplifted and filled with the peace, contentment, joy and radiance of seeing more of the glory, and not having a veil on us? In Ephesians 3 we have this amazing prayer, "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

You don't have to put on fake smile or pretend that you are filled with joy. Just be who you are in Christ. Paul writes, "Therefore since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." There is a famous pastor in Southern California who went around asking people what kind of church they wanted in their community. Then he changed the truth of God's Word to appeal to people. He preached self-esteem and feeling good about yourself more than he preached about Jesus who died and rose again to rescue us from sin. Paul says that is not the way we reach people with the blessings we have in Christ. We do not get discouraged. We do not lose heart. We do not use deception. We simply set forth the truth of God's Word plainly. We simply are who we are in Christ. As Paul writes later, "We believe there for we speak." We live each day to reflect the glory of God that has rescued us. May the Lord Jesus bless your week as you reflect his glory. Amen